

# Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment Rabies Risk Assessment For Human Exposure To Animals

## Dog or cat bite in U.S. to human (continuation of animal bite algorithm)<sup>†</sup>

No

Is animal available for testing or quarantine? <sup>‡</sup>

Yes

Attempt to locate animal; **report to animal control** (have patient call animal control while at healthcare facility, as details provided directly from bite victim will increase chances of locating animal).

- educate patient on how rare rabies is in dogs & cats in Colorado (e.g. last rabid dog in Colorado: 2003 from Morgan County (imported); last rabid dog in Denver metro area was over 35 years ago; there have been rabies positive cats in the counties where the skunk variant is present but it is still a rare event)

- advise patient to wait to hear back from animal control

- if animal is not located, encourage patient to discuss with local health department; provide local health and state health department phone numbers

Withhold PEP & Quarantine dog, cat or ferret for 10 days

If animal dies or develops signs of rabies, test brain tissue

If animal remains healthy, PEP not indicated

Negative result, no further action needed; PEP not indicated

Positive result, initiate PEP

Dog/cat is not located; risk assessment provided by public health officials provided to patient and/or physician, based on a **combinations of factors**:

- most important factor: geographic area of state (e.g. Western Slope is considered **low risk**, PEP usually not recommended unless animal exhibited neurological signs vs. **stray** animals from **rural areas in eastern CO with known rabies epizootics** is considered as **increased risk**)

- **healthy** acting is **low risk** vs. **acute neurological symptoms** is **high risk**

- provoked vs. unprovoked (provoked: PEP is usually not recommended)

- known animal vs. stray (Animal with a collar indicates a level of care which is likely to include previous rabies vaccination and thus a lower risk. Stray cats routinely seen within bite victim's neighborhood can be observed from a distance for 10 days for health status)

If risk is low, public health will not encourage vaccination

If risk is increased, public health will encourage vaccination

If risk is high, public health may assist in coordinating PEP & document completion of rabies PEP

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<sup>†</sup> This algorithm is to assist local health departments and physicians with assessing risk of rabies exposure when a dog or cat is not available for 10 day quarantine or testing. Bites from dogs or cats outside of U.S.—consult CDPHE. **Additional rabies resources and statistics** are available on CDPHE webpage: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/rabies>. For assistance with risk assessment, contact your local health department or **Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment**, Communicable Disease Branch at (303) 692-2700.